

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

Voluntary - Public

Clearance Office: Office of Scientific and Technical Affairs (OSTA)

Date: 4/9/2009

GAIN Report Number: PL9004

Poland

Post: Warsaw

New Excise Stamp Regime from March 1

Report Categories:

Wine

Approved By:

Eric Wenberg

Prepared By:

Eric Wenberg

Report Highlights:

From March 1, 2009, Poland will initiate a new excise stamp regime for alcohol. Excise tax stamp plans were updated simultaneously for tobacco. The plan mirrors a UK move in 2005. Poland's Ministry of Finance aims to simplify the regime with fewer kinds of stamps, but at the same time does raise the excise by nine percent.

General Information:

From March 1, 2009, Poland will initiate a new excise stamp regime for alcohol. Above, new stamps for imported bottles up to one half liter and then larger. Excise tax stamp plans were updated simultaneously for tobacco. The plan mirrors a UK move in 2005. Poland's Ministry of Finance aims to simplify the regime with fewer kinds of stamps, but at the same time does raise the excise by nine percent. The new regulations reduce the number of stamps issued from forty to eight, and improves the security of the stamp with more counterfeit fighting technology. At present, the new system proscribes that product stamped with the old excise may continue to be sold until September 1, 2009. FAS Warsaw is satisfied, speaking to contacts, that the phase in will be extended an additional six months. Under ideal circumstances, duty paid, imported product should never be restamped. The Polish Government seems to be aware of international concern over the phase in of the new stamp regime and is on the verge of approving the use of the old stamp from September 1, 2009 to March 1, 2010. After that deadline, store owners can restamp products and they would not be recalled. Amending this rule to extend the restamping deadline is within the authority of the Ministry of Finance and does not need interministerial or legislative approval.

Contacts at the Ministry of Finance have been receptive of U.S. industry concerns. The Distilled Spirits Council of the United States has been active in communicating to the Government of Poland that the new stamp regime should be introduced with a long period for changing the stamps and about new costs of administering the stamp regime.

It appears that the overall increase in administering the program and the increase in the excise tax are only nine percent higher than the Ministry's last update to the excise tax in 2005. The new excise stamp regime does require a substantial increase in the prepayment for stamps, but that this amount is credited to the exporter and will be applied against the eventual levy of the excise. The Ministry of Finance stated clearly to FAS officers that the overall increase of the levy is nine percent.

The United States directly exports just under \$10 million to Poland in wine and distilled spirits annually. About \$15 million in U.S. product is stored in bonded warehouses in the UK or Germany and moved to Poland after excise is paid and bottles stamped. The provisions for higher excise taxes affect beer sales after March 1, 2009, as well, but stamping is not required.

This report is based on a combination of official and nonofficial sources. The best source of information for U.S. exporters on these changes is your local importer and exporters are encouraged to be in contact with Polish business on how the changeover is moving ahead. Any U.S. exporter or U.S. based multinational, concerned that these changes may effect their sales to Poland is invited to contact the FAS office at the American Embassy, Warsaw at 48 22 504 2336 or agwarsaw@fas.usda.gov for an update or contact information at the Ministry of Finance on how to get the latest news on changes and how to comply with the changes.